

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 02492 201451Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 2492

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ES
SUBJ: VISIT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES SHELTON
AND SCHNEIDER TO EL SALVADOR MAY 9-12, 1978

REF: SAN SALVADOR 2332

1. THIS IS AN INITIAL REPORT ON OVERALL VISIT TO SAN SALVADOR
OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES

SHELTON AND SCHNEIDER. MORE
DETAILED RECORD OF INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSIONS WILL FOLLOW.
APPROVAL BY THE TWO DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES MAY BE
SOUGHT AS APPROPRIATE.

2. SUBJECT VISIT WAS IN RESPONSE TO COMMENT OF GOES THAT IT
WAS BEING JUDGED ON BASIS OF ITS OPPONENTS' STATEMENTS AND
WITHOUT HAVING OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT ITS SIDE OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN EL SALVADOR. ALL MEETINGS,
WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS NOTED BELOW, WERE ARRANGED BY GOES.
ARRIVAL EVENING MAY 9 AND DEPARTURE EARLY MORNING MAY 12
ALLOWED ONLY TWO DAYS OF PROGRAMMING, BUT TIME FULLY
UTILIZED. GOES ARRANGED PROGRAM WHICH INCLUDED MEETINGS
WITH VICE-PRESIDENT, MINISTERS OF PLANNING, INTERIOR, JUSTICE
AND FOREIGN RELATIONS, PLUS VISIT TO AREA OF RECENT
RURAL DISTURBANCES, ESCORTED BY ARMED FORCES CHIEF
OF STAFF. MEETINGS ARRANGED BY EMBASSY WERE WITH
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PAGE 02 SAN SA 02492 201451Z

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, LEADERS OF CATHOLIC CHURCH AND
TWO SMALL DINNERS HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR WHICH INCLUDED
BOTH PRO-AND ANTI-GOES LEADERS. GOES PROGRAM QUITE
OBVIOUSLY PUT TOGETHER SOMEWHAT HASTILY WITH LITTLE
COORDINATION, AND MOST OFFICIALS SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN
AS TO WHAT MESSAGE THEY WERE TO CONVEY. ALL WERE WILLING
TO ANSWER QUESTIONS IN AREAS OF THEIR COMPETENCE, BUT WERE

GENERALLY WEAK IN ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS. VICE-PRESIDENT, FOREIGN MINISTER AND GENERAL ROSALES WERE MORE RESPONSIVE AND IMPRESSIVE THAN MINISTERS OF PLANNING, INTERIOR AND JUSTICE.

3. GENERAL PICTURE PORTRAYED BY GOES SPOKESMEN WAS MAGNITUDE OF PROBLEMS FACED BY GOES IN AREAS OF OVER-POPULATION, SCARCITY OF LAND, LACK OF EDUCATION, MEDICAL FACILITIES AND NEED FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE TO PROVIDE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND RELIEVE PRESSURES IN RURAL AREAS. GOES FEELS THAT IT HAS, IN NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN, BASIS FOR IMPROVING SITUATION BUT NEEDS FINANCIAL/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND END OF UNSETTLING OPPOSITION AND VIOLENCE, BASICALLY COMMUNIST-INSPIRED ACCORDING TO GOES, BUT CARRIED OUT BY CATHOLIC CHURCH, OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES, AND TERRORISTS.

4. GOES CLAIMED NO VIOLATION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER ROMERO ADMINISTRATION, BUT ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTION SUCH AS POLITICA PRISONERS, UNLAWFUL DETENTION, FREEDOM OF ELECTIONS, ETC., GENERALLY WEAK AND UNCONVINCING. SEVERAL OFFICIALS ADMITTED PROBABILITY OF CERTAIN VIOLATIONS BUT PLACED BLAME ON EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF SECURITY FORCES AND FEAR OF SITUATION OF ANARCHY IF FIRM CONTROL NOT MAINTAINED, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS. HIERARCHY OF CATHOLIC CHURCH DOES APPEAR DIVIDED ON APPROACH TO RESOLUTION OF SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS, BUT ACTIVIST ARCHBISHOP ROMERO APPEARS TO HAVE GREATER SUPPORT FOR HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SAN SA 02492 201451Z

OPENLY ANTI-GOES POLICIES THAN MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. OPPOSITION GROUPS, COMBINED WITH IMPRESSIONS GAINED IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AREA, PRESENT MORE CONVINCING CASE THAT VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONTINUE TO OCCUR, WITH GOES-SUPPORTED AND DIRECTED RURAL ORGANIZATION ORDER AND NATIONAL GUARD BEING CHIEF OFFENDERS. SOME INDICATIONS THAT GOES LEADERSHIP AWARE OF THESE VIOLATIONS, BUT EITHER AFRAID OR UNWILLING TO TAKE STRONG AND POSSIBLY DANGEROUS STEPS TO CORRECT THEM. MOST RESPONSIBLE PERSONS FROM EVERY SECTOR, INCLUDING GOES ITSELF, APPEAR TO HAVE STRONG DESIRE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS AND ABIDE BY HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES, BUT GREAT DIVISION ON HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THESE ENDS.

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